

CAS Reading List

2007



Foreword

One of my key objectives for the Royal Air Force is to ensure that everyone has a good understanding of our history and heritage, the world in which we operate and the role of air power in military operations. As a consequence, my intent is to publish an annual reading list of contemporary books that will help increase that understanding. The list will be revised every year to ensure that it remains relevant, and a complete set of the books will be available through the Force Development staff at each of our major units. The 10 books described in this first reading list include 5 on Air Power, one on more general military matters, 2 on international relations and politics, one on leadership and, finally, one on contemporary cultural issues. Whilst I do not expect everyone to read the complete collection of books, the range of topics should mean that there is something for everybody, depending on your particular interests. Taken either singly or together, the books should provide you with an improved level of knowledge and, at the same time, stimulate ideas and questions.



In order to develop the Royal Air Force in the way we would like, we need to understand what Air Power delivers and be able to clearly and convincingly articulate our case. We have every right to be proud of our history and what we deliver as part of the UK's Joint capability, but there is always something to learn from the past. The challenge for us all, of course, is to use that knowledge wisely and effectively to steer the future development of the Royal Air Force. I hope this reading list will help you play your part in this exciting task.

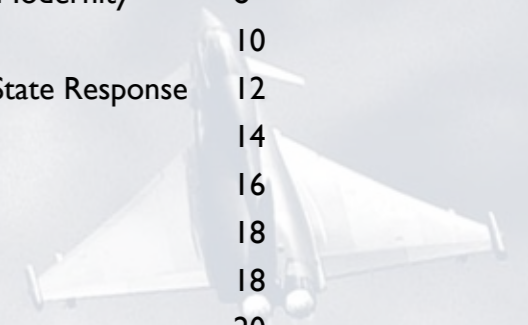
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CAS Reading List

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The Narrow Margin

By Derek Wood and Derek Dempster

Published by: Pen & Sword, 2003



The Battle of Britain holds a unique place both within the history of the RAF and that of air power as a whole, and yet whilst many within the Air Force know the outline of the story, few are aware of the depth and breadth of heroism, ingenuity and technical achievement that came together, just in time, to produce the end result that all are aware of. For anyone who wishes to improve their understanding of this critical period in our nation's history – and to really understand why it was such a crucial victory – this book is without doubt the first port of call. Although first printed well over 40 years ago, it has stood the test of time, as is evident in the fact that it has been recently reprinted. The reason why is quite simple – thanks to the access which the authors enjoyed to the original Air Historical Branch narrative on the subject, it remains without doubt one of the most authoritative works ever written on the subject. This is why it was used as the principal source of information for the screenplay of the film 'The Battle of Britain'. It provides, in an easily digestible form, a tremendous wealth of information that covers the not just the period of the Battle in 1940, but also explains just how the RAF and Luftwaffe had shaped themselves towards this conflict over the inter-war years.

Indeed the book is arranged into 3 very distinct parts. The first deals with the two air forces concerned and how they had developed during the 1920s and 1930s, before going on to examine particular areas in more detail – the aircraft, intelligence, radar, the Royal Observer Corps, radio – and of course the Dowding System which brought all of these elements together. The second looks at the period immediately preceding the Battle of Britain, or in other words what Churchill described as the Battle of France, as this obviously provides the final context for the struggle that was to come. Finally, the Battle is dealt with in considerable detail, with a day-by day analysis of the ebbs and flows of the conflict. The book is filled with copious illustrations, ranging from contemporary photographs through excellent

maps and reproductions of official documents. It also contains an incredibly detailed set of annexes, so whether you want to know about the units taking part in the various phases of the battle, the layout of Fighter Command, production figures for fighter aircraft, losses on both sides – or even the names of all the aircrew who fought in the Battle under Fighter Command's control – it is all here. With a personal seal of approval from Dowding himself, it is unlikely that it will ever be bettered in terms of its ability to provide an overall framework for understanding the Battle. And although there have been a number of books written since which provide deeper insights into specific aspects, they make a great deal more sense when read after this one.

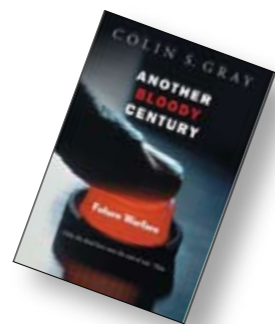
Perhaps it is best though to let the authors have the last word, with an excerpt from their original introduction.

“In 1940 one of the most significant battles of history was fought in the skies over Britain. Its outcome had a profound effect on the future of the civilised world. The Battle of Britain saved the country from invasion. If the R.A.F. had been defeated all the efforts of the Army and Navy could hardly have averted defeat in the face of complete German air superiority ... The battle was not, however, won in the period from July to October 1940 alone. The outcome was the culmination of the preparation, good judgement and error made in the preceding seven years...”

Another Bloody Century: Future Warfare

By Colin S Gray

Published by: London:Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005



Colin Gray is an Anglo-American Professor of International Politics and Strategic Studies at Reading University and a highly regarded authority on strategy and security. His central theme of this book is the apparent paradox that although factors such as technology and motives may cause changes in the character of warfare, the actual nature of warfare does not change very much. Warfare's highly complex nature results in a huge degree of uncertainty when trying to predict the cause and the course of future wars, something that the author warns strongly against attempting, although he singles out climate change as likely to be a major driver of conflict in the 21st Century.

The author approaches this very wide-ranging subject under three general themes. He first sets out his thoughts on some basic principles highlighting the importance of seeing war in its proper context. He reasons that political context is the most important factor in the study of conflict. His second theme is to look at the course of warfare from 1800 to 2100. He supplements his thoughts on warfare past, present and future by focusing on certain strands including the Revolutions in Military Affairs, war in space and cyberspace, weapons of mass destruction, and regular vs irregular warfare. His inclusion of terrorism as a form of irregular warfare is based on the principle that terrorism is just another way to prevent or secure a strategic political outcome, just like war. The author asserts that warfare does not always change at a steady, evolutionary state. New factors can interact with existing trends in an unpredictable fashion leading to potentially revolutionary changes or discontinuities. He claims that the complex and unpredictable nature of warfare makes surprise in the future almost a cast iron certainty. Gray's last theme points out, perhaps too pessimistically, the difficulties in predicting or controlling future war. Although attempts to limit war should be encouraged he indicates that measures such as

arms control agreements will only be effective when it suits all potential belligerents and such measures can be all too transient. He concludes that politics and strategy continue to be the main agents for the potential control or deterrence of war, as they always have been in the past.

Colin Gray's comments on the plethora of 'big ideas' that have promised much in recent years are interesting even if some readers would not wholeheartedly agree with the author's views of many of them as simply 'reinventing the wheel'. Included in his list of buzzwords are 'network-centric warfare', 'asymmetric warfare', 'fourth-generation warfare', and 'effects-based operations'. Gray is no technophobe and he is not saying that these concepts are wrong or ineffective but that it would be dangerous to expect too much of them as they are only one aspect of a much broader strategic landscape. He sees the study of history as a crucial step towards understanding warfare.

Another Bloody Century is of particular value to those involved in the high level planning of warfare in the future. It will show the reader some of the pitfalls of always adhering to 'conventional wisdom' with the result that we will be fighting the next war using the same strategy, tactics and weapons as the last one. This kind of strategic mindset, accompanied by an excessive and misplaced reliance on technology, can lead to military disaster. Although Gray tends to use the American political and military experience to illustrate his thesis, the main messages in the book are applicable to any nation or organization. Colin Gray's thoughtful book encourages the reader not only to think deeper about warfare but to think differently. The perspectives he offers on war sometimes run contrary to those of other observers but his depth of knowledge and analytical prowess result in very persuasive arguments for his thesis that warfare is, unfortunately, a permanent feature of the human condition. Blind acceptance of the idea that conventional inter-state warfare is a thing of the past is likely to lead to the sort of strategic surprise that has plagued military and political leaders for centuries. Warfare is simply not that predictable but this should not stop us from trying to prepare for the unexpected.

Firestorm, the Bombing of Dresden, 1945

Edited by Paul Addison and Jeremy A. Crang

Published by: Pimlico, London 2006



Bomber Command of the Royal Air Force was active throughout the Second World War and, for a significant proportion of the time, was the only means by which we could carry our resistance into the heartland of the enemy and his conquered territories. Over one third of a million sorties were flown over the course of the war in Europe alone with some 9000 aircraft lost and 50,000 allied personnel killed or reported as missing in action. Targets for the heavy bomber force varied from Berlin, through the V1/V2 rocket sites at Peenemunde, to German Army positions opposing the Normandy landings. On numerous occasions, the area attacked consisted of little more than arable fields – particularly when decoys had been deployed or bombing accuracy was suspect. Some raids, such as the attacks on the dams, have entered the annals of history and legend; others have faded from the memories of all but the remaining survivors. Yet the combined Bomber Command/USAAF Eighth Air Force raids on Dresden on 13-14 February 1945 have probably occasioned more impassioned debate than the rest put together. This debate has inevitably been fuelled by retrospective moralising, self-conscious justification of positions and an unhealthy dose of Cold War propaganda.

It is hugely important that Royal Air Force personnel are able to understand the complexities of the debate, and to put forward a reasoned response to those who seek to maintain that twenty-first century ethical (and legal) principles can be applied retrospectively to the discredit of the strategic leaders involved in prosecuting total war against a very determined enemy. *Firestorm* is by no means the 'last word' on Dresden in all senses of the expression. But it contains some useful chapters by distinguished historians. That said, *Firestorm* also contains one essay which represents the very worst of the liberal philosophical genre. Donald Bloxham's chapter is ill-considered and ill-informed showing the

more extreme interpretation of the legal standing at the time; he also applies an entirely inappropriate moralistic stance.

On the positive side, the chapter by Seb Cox explains why and how Dresden came to be bombed in a clear and dispassionate manner. He describes the part played by each of the senior commanders and the role of Churchill in particular. In retrospect, it is easy to situate the bombing of Dresden on the 13-14th of February in the exact context of how close the raid was to the end of the war; but this was far from clear at the time amid a mood of general pessimism. Mr Cox explains the 'complex amalgam' of factors that led to the raids. The chapter by Hew Strachan puts the Dresden raids into a wider context. Tami Davis Biddle examines the wartime reactions while Richard Overy looks at the post war reflections.

While this book is something of a curate's egg, the benefits of the good bits far outweigh the bad. For better or worse, almost everyone has a view on the bombing of Dresden and most of those are at the liberal end of the spectrum. It is all too easy to look at the raids through latter-day rose-tinted spectacles. A rationale analysis needs to examine them in their own context – legally, morally and in relation to the military strategy of the time.

Landscapes of the Jihad: Militancy, Morality, Modernity

By Faisal Devji

Published by: London: C Hurst, 2005



Despite huge media interest, militant Islam and the concept of Jihad or Holy War, as practised by Osama Bin Laden's Al-Qaeda movement remains a mysterious jumble of facts, opinion and ill-founded speculation to many Western observers. *Landscapes of the Jihad* attempts to put Al-Qaeda into its true global context and encourages the reader to think more deeply about the issues involved. Faisal Devji, a New York-based professor of history, does not ascribe to the view that Al-Qaeda is a global movement in the sense that it has a large international network of highly sophisticated operatives and supporting members. Instead he likens Al-Qaeda more to movements like environmentalists, social justice organizations and anti-globalization activists. Two of the characteristics that these movements share are a decentralised organizational structure, which makes them more difficult to deal with, and an emphasis on the moral aspects of their 'cause' as opposed to the politics which the groups refuse to be involved with. It is the ethical content of the Jihad that fuels Bin Laden's anger against America and the West. The author asserts that Bin Laden has no interest in creating Islamic states, unlike some other Islamic militant groups, but is reacting to what he sees as oppression of Muslims by Western societies. Indeed, Bin Laden's unorthodox interpretation of the Jihad has moved it away from the classical Islamic tradition of collective responsibility to one of individual duty based on strict moral principles. Al-Qaeda does not rely on the traditional structures of Muslim authority, in fact its strength lies in the fragmentation of these structures permitting greater freedom of action and greater security against its opponents. Devji sees Bin Laden as more radical than any other Muslim group including more narrowly-defined movements such as Hamas and Hezbollah. These developments are seen against a background of wider change in Muslim society, moving away from the traditional and fundamentalist forms of authority.

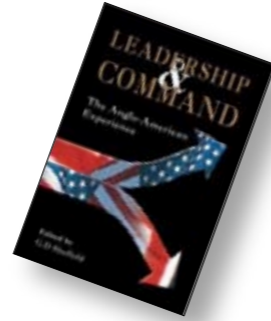
The value of Devji's book is that it does not repeat the received wisdom of recent years but looks at the Jihad movement from a fresh viewpoint that is both unconventional and rational. His incisive analysis of Bin Laden's words and deeds, and those of his lieutenant Ayman al-Zawahiri, go some way to explain the motives of Al-Qaeda and similar militant organizations. Devji points out that Bin Laden is a clever manipulator of the mass media which he uses to achieve maximum impact whether it be the carefully staged release of video-taped interviews of Bin Laden himself or the spectacular martyrdom of suicide bombers which we can witness on our television sets. The judicious use of media, including the Internet and satellite television, is another indication of the difference between Al-Qaeda and mainstream Muslim militancy. Bin Laden's emphasis on ethical issues such as justice and dignity for all Muslims may appear vague when compared to the more solid, often territorial claims of other movements but it is this very factor that makes Al-Qaeda such a dangerous and difficult enemy. The author, perhaps unwittingly, illustrates a military principle that has been tried with mixed results in several campaigns of the recent past, the battle for 'hearts and minds'. Osama Bin Laden is proving to be a lot more successful at this than many of his predecessors and this book is a very useful step towards our understanding the phenomenon of Islamic Jihad as perpetrated by Al-Qaeda.

Landscapes of the Jihad, with its unconventional view of militant Islam, is a controversial book that has caused much debate in the academic world that specialises in the subject area. The author's conclusion that Jihad is not an international movement but instead is fragmented, highly dispersed and individualistic challenges popular Western belief. Its value to a wider audience is its accessibility, it is by no means a long book and it is well written in a straightforward style, and its potential to provoke thought on a difficult and often mysterious subject.

Leadership and Command

Edited by G D Sheffield

Published by: Brassey's (UK) Ltd, 2002



This book, which is a paperback reprint, comprises the same collection of 12 essays written by members of the British Commission for Military History as the original version – and in this lies its main attraction. The papers are written by a number of well-known academics, ranging from Gary Sheffield himself through Brian Holden Reid and Julian Thompson to Michael Howard, and examine key aspects of the experience of command in US and British armies, over campaigns ranging from the American Civil War to Korea, Vietnam and the Falklands, and finally the Gulf War of 1991.

Leadership and command are the essential elements that allow any branch of the armed forces to function effectively in war, but the exercise of command in particular is an area which is not generally written about, and these essays make a major contribution to the understanding of this vital topic. Whilst some of the conflicts focussed on will obviously be more familiar to readers, others will be less so – but in all of them there is a great deal that can be learned.

For instance Julian Thompson's piece, which contrasts the experiences of Anzio in 1944 and the Falklands in 1982, reinforces just how important it is to command, as well as the impact that technology (in the form of communications) can have on how a leader is able to exercise his control. In fact the importance of providing clear and decisive communication of the commander's intent is one that is reinforced in a number of other areas of the book; what seems amazing is the number of senior officers who were clearly unable to grasp this requirement.

This argument is certainly supported in the articles on the First World War, which are also invaluable in terms of providing a rebuttal to the stereotypical 'Blackadder' view of generalship in the British Army during that conflict. More importantly, it provides a great deal of understanding about how the

commanders in that army had been produced, and how that changed during the course of the war; learning from experience also being another clear differentiator between the successful leaders and their contemporaries. Indeed changes of command, and the subsequent opportunity to see the difference individual leadership and command styles can make to a particular organisation can also be exploited in terms of learning lessons, and the example of the Chindits in the Second World War after Orde Wingate's death certainly falls into this camp.

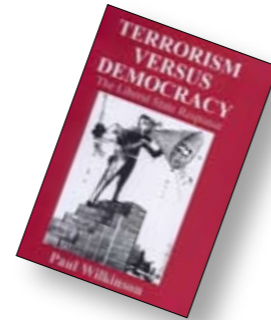
Two areas with surprising contemporary resonance are those dealing with the development of the system of higher command in the British and American armies in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. The significance does not lie in the specific situations, but in the difficulties of preparing commanders for operations across the spectrum of conflict when real experience is only available in one area, and that may be one which does not test all the skills necessary for success elsewhere.

The layout of the book makes it an easy read, as it does not require examination in chronological order but can simply be picked up to look at whatever subject appeals, and most of the essays can be read in around 30 minutes or so, obviously ideal in a busy environment! Moreover it provides a wealth of examples – good, bad, and indifferent – of leadership and command, and the factors that contribute to these essential elements of war fighting. Of course it does suffer from some drawbacks, for instance the relative shortness of the papers means that a totally even-handed approach in analysis is not always evident, but they are *all* stimulating and provide much food for thought, and hence justify the recommendation of this book for inclusion in the list.

Terrorism Versus Democracy :The Liberal State Response

By Paul Wilkinson

Published by: Routledge, 2000



Paul Wilkinson has been studying terrorism for decades; certainly long before it became fashionable to do so. As a result what he writes is well informed and seasoned with a tremendous amount of understanding of the subject, so the reprinting by Routledge of this particular book is good news for anyone wishing to understand both the phenomenon of terrorism and the options available to democracies in terms of dealing with it.

It not only provides tremendous breadth in terms of providing an overall introduction to the subject of terrorism, but also manages to fit in considerable depth in terms of its analysis. And it is certainly not a book that excuses terrorism, although it does provide an understanding of why some groups adopt a terrorist response. It examines both the more recent terror networks and those that have been around for decades, and the new edition is brought up to date in terms of events at the start of this century, with new chapters on the 9/11 attacks, the growth of international terrorism, the Al-Qaida network and the 'War on Terror'. Its aim, as clearly stated in the preface, is to "concentrate on the problems of identifying and implementing an effective democratic response to terrorism which is proportionate, and fully compatible with the maintenance of democracy, human rights and the rule of law." In doing so it examines exactly what constitutes a terrorist or terrorist organisation, and also explains the uses of terrorism as a political, social, religious and criminal weapon.

Wilkinson also links the use of terrorism to a wider repertoire of struggle, and clearly identifies the range of options, opportunities, and approaches that can be taken at both national, and perhaps more importantly at trans-national level in order to try and manage or control terrorism. What he certainly

makes clear is that there is no prospect of 'winning' a war on terror, as there will always be those in society who feel sufficiently alienated to consider attacking their fellow citizens as a legitimate act. But what can be done is to minimise the possibility of such individuals converting their own beliefs into effective widespread movements. Whilst the book is rightly regarded as essential reading for undergraduate and postgraduate students of terrorism studies, political science and international relations, given the likely scenarios that many of us will be involved with in the near-term it also has much to offer any member of the RAF who wants a more complete understanding of the subject than that generally represented by the media.

A considerable amount of detailed information is included – some of which may come as a surprise. For instance in the section dealing with aviation security, the success of the American government in dealing with hijacking in the early 1970s is fascinating not just for the understanding of the approach taken (which reduced the annual number of hijackings from 31 in 1972 to 3 in 1973) but also for the details of the amount of hardware confiscated at the departure gate through enhanced checks (3 500 lbs of explosives, 2 000 guns and 23 000 knives in 1973 alone!) And perhaps this is the greatest strength of the book for the non-specialist – the linking of theory to policy and practice, and illustrating each with examples ranging back over the last couple of centuries – which makes for a genuinely readable volume.

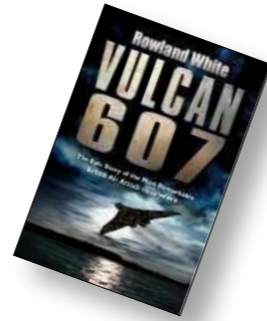
Perhaps the last word should be left to Professor Michael Clarke from King's College London, who had this to say: 'No one understands terrorism better than Paul Wilkinson ... if policy makers read this book they will understand the problems better. If terrorists read it they will understand themselves a lot better.'

Vulcan 607

By Rowland White

Published by Bantam Press, London, 2006-12-19

Reviewed by Wg Cdr Steve Pitcher



Rowland White has produced a highly engaging book on a contentious subject. The first 'Black Buck' raid on Stanley Airport excited much debate and is a good example of why it is necessary to understand the arguments behind Air Power. Was it an overblown waste of effort that only produced one crater in a runway? Or was it a way for Great Britain to offer a dramatic military response having been unceremoniously ejected from the Islands and, therefore, a vital political statement that demonstrated the capacity to attack the Argentine mainland and thus added a new complication to their planning?

The bulk of the book is concerned with the preparations for the mission; its eventual execution, although hugely engaging, is a relatively small part of the story. While the crew of XM607 and the crews of the supporting tankers carried out the mission, they would never have had the chance without the contributions of hundreds of specialists and ground crew from all round the Air Force. The leadership and commitment of everyone involved in the operation, from the lowest rank to the Chief of the Air Staff himself, is evident.

Almost every page demonstrates the necessity of concepts such as 'agility' that we focus on so closely today. Responsiveness, robustness, flexibility and adaptability are the four constituent parts of agility and the story of the Black Buck raid clearly illustrates how all of them were vital to achieving the mission. Lateral thought was required to even come up with the idea given that the Vulcan had not been configured to carry conventional bombs for some twenty years. Nor had the aircraft been fitted

for air-to-air refuelling or the crews trained in its vagaries. The picture of brilliantly creative solutions to 'impossible' problems, dogged persistence and sheer bloody mindedness is one that inspires and entertains. The thought that today's Air Force is populated by the same kind of people is heartening indeed.

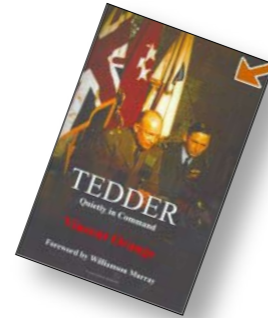
The book demonstrates why there is so much controversy over the raid's overall worth. The raid is considered to be a complete waste of time and effort by many because only one bomb out of twenty-one hit the runway; but this was precisely what was intended. For the first time in an unclassified source, the book explains in detail why this was. The effect of that single crater is also open to debate, after all it is often stated that naval gunfire and bombing by Task Force Harriers (of both varieties) caused more damage but such arguments omit the impact of the raid on the ruling Argentine Junta. Concerned about the possibility of attack on the mainland, the Argentine government redeployed some of their fighters away from offensive support to home defence duties. The book provides a very good platform for debate on the Effects Based Approach (EBA) to operations that the UK's Armed Forces have adopted – what was the Effect that was desired and what Effects were achieved? In arguing about the answers, we can see how difficult it is to get EBA right.

In all, this is an excellent read. It is different to the other books in this list in that it is less academic in nature and actually feels like a novel. It is, however, well researched and brings a lot of hitherto unknown factual and personal material to light. It provides an excellent vehicle for discussing today's approaches to the organisation and application of Air Power.

Tedder: Quietly in Command

By Vincent Orange. London

Published by: Frank Cass Publishers, 2004



Surprisingly, this is the first published biography of Marshal of the Royal Air Force Arthur Tedder, who was one of the most influential military figures of WWII and became Chief of the Air Staff in the immediate post-war era.

Tedder was an unusual officer outside the mould for senior military figures of his time. 'Quietly' in the title of this biography reflects the central character in which the author has focused his study on this intellectual man. Vincent Orange has had full cooperation from Tedder's family to chart this biography. Tedder was born near Stirling in 1890, educated at Magdalene College, Cambridge and served in the Royal Flying Corps in France during WW I before transferring to the newly formed RAF. It was his understanding of the importance of skilful management in WW I that enabled him to become a great leader and effective communicator in WWII. His leadership was based on professional knowledge and competence combined with a manner which the Times summed up in his obituary following his death in June 1967 as, 'the most unstuffy of great commanders, who could be found sitting cross-legged, jacketless, pipe smoking, answering questions on a desert airstrip'. Tedder shaped the attitudes and developed the capabilities of the RAF that made the service's efforts in the Mediterranean truly joint. His forces were key to the Allied victory at the Battle of El Alamein. His quiet leadership led General Eisenhower to pick Tedder as the only man, British or American, with sufficient stature and understanding of both strategic and tactical airpower to be his deputy and senior airman for Operation Overlord, the invasion of Europe.

Tedder's quiet leadership, devoid of showmanship, was ideally suited to the coalition era but did not always instantly impress at home. The extrovert newspaper publisher Lord Beaverbrook sought to

damage Tedder's prospects with Churchill and many of the problems in the planning of Overlord stemmed from the attitude shown towards Tedder by senior echelons of the British Army, notably Montgomery. The author stresses that Tedder did not have a single service parochial view of the planning but his poor relationship with Montgomery stemmed from an earlier reluctance by the army commander to share credit with the RAF for his desert victories. Also, in Tedder's view, the problems in the joint planning of the invasion of Europe were caused by Montgomery deliberately misleading the RAF about his strategic intentions. The author claims that Tedder had a better understanding of the strategic problems facing Eisenhower, and supported his superior against both Churchill and other senior British Generals, such as Sir Alan Brooke, whom he upset. Tedder was not overawed by such powerful personalities and understood the need to maintain the cohesion of a coalition. Here there are many lessons and echoes for today, when Western coalitions again face internal and external pressures, which can easily fracture them.

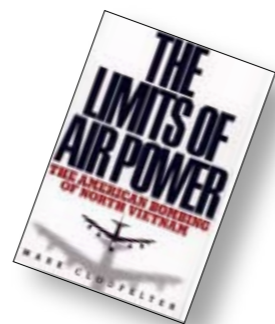
Tedder was a great military figure because he was so modern. He understood the technological and scientific basis of modern war, as well as the necessary complex support structure to support operations. He started the war in a two-star appointment but by war's end he was capable of holding his own with all senior military figures and with statesmen of the stature of Churchill and Stalin. It was his capacity to be able to deal with such dominant political personalities that stood him in good stead when he was made CAS after the war, and subsequently on his appointment to the British Military Mission in Washington at the height of the Cold War.

This book not only makes a major contribution to the historiography of WW II but provides a shining model of a modern senior officer who was able to operate in the highest levels of a coalition for present day commanders to emulate.

The Limits of Air Power: The American Bombing of North Vietnam

By Mark Clodfelter

Published by: University of Nebraska Press, 2006



Ever since airpower was first used as an offensive platform, military commanders, political leaders and commentators have debated its effectiveness. Vietnam is no exception and since that war there has been a widespread belief that airpower failed at the beginning of the war because of political control and restraint imposed upon the bombing. The notion persists that if unrestrained strategic bombing had taken place early in the war then the conflict would have ended sooner than it did.

The author writing more than a decade after the war ended tests this view against three case studies: the Rolling Thunder campaign (Mar 65-Oct 68), and the Linebacker I (May-Oct 72) and Linebacker II (Dec 72) campaigns. The former has been perceived as a failure while the latter two are seen as successful. Clodfelter's thesis is that the success or failure of these campaigns was dependent on the strategic environment that existed at the time.

Clodfelter sets the air campaign against North Vietnam in the historical setting that guided the US political and military leadership waging the war. He posits that the perceived success of strategic bombing in WWII and the threat of using it in both Korea and the Cuban Missile Crisis influenced American thinking about the use of strategic airpower as an effective political instrument. In the mid-1960s, airpower was once again used as a means to halt communist advancement in Asia. Nevertheless, the political context concerning Vietnam was different from that which existed in Korea more than a decade previously: there was no UN mandate and the government in the South was much less stable than in Korea.

The theme of the book is that Rolling Thunder failed, and the Linebackers succeeded, not because of the limitations and restraints but because it was an appropriate or inappropriate form of warfare at the time. President Johnson imposed limitations on Rolling Thunder because he was concerned about Chinese and Soviet intervention and he believed in 1965 that the threat of US airpower would deter the North from supporting the communist Viet Cong in the South. However, bombing was ineffective against the North because the emphasis was on doctrine to destroy the North's means of production and distribution while what was happening at the time was that the Viet Cong were waging a guerrilla war in the South and needed few external supplies.

Fewer restrictions were placed by President Nixon on the strategic bombing campaigns detailed in the case studies on the Linebacker missions in 1972. These missions were deemed a success because they led to the signing of a peace treaty less than a month after the completion of Linebacker II. However, Clodfelter argues that two significant factors had created a very different strategic environment at this time. Firstly, both the Soviets and the Chinese had placed a priority on détente with the US. This gave President Nixon much more freedom of action in Vietnam and allowed him to apply airpower without the restraints plaguing his predecessor. Also, the Linebackers were waged against a large scale conventional assault from the North, which required logistical support. Therefore, the US doctrine of attacking production and distribution was appropriate.

The thesis is well argued although the author does not make enough of the differences between the limited strategic bombing and the interdiction campaign that was mostly taking place. I would have enjoyed more analysis into the targeting process to be able to draw parallels to the modern air wars against guerrilla forces. Its usefulness for today's military commanders is to remind them that an initial analysis about a military campaign does not always stand the test of time. The supreme test of a strategic bombing campaign's efficiency should be measured against a nation's war aims and this may take some time to emerge.

Revolt on the Tigris

By: Mark Etherington

Published by: Cornell University Press, 2005



This is a personal account written by Mark Etherington, who served as a Governate Co-ordinator of the Coalition Provisional Authority [CPA] for Wasit Province in Iraq in the interregnum between the end of the war and the formal transfer of power to an Iraqi Government. The CPA established a civilian Governance Team under a Governate Co-ordinator in each of the eighteen Provinces of Iraq. Four of these teams were headed by Britons.

Etherington himself was well-qualified both by experience and temperament for this most difficult of jobs. He was familiar with the Middle East, having been bought up in Kuwait and Qatar, had military experience in counter-insurgency having served six years as an officer with the Parachute Regiment, including two tours in Northern Ireland, and had extensive experience in the Balkans during the 1990s. His personal courage and military background were both to stand him in good stead in the nine months he spent in Iraq. Yet neither his own childhood in the region, nor his experience of the tortuous politics of the Balkans and the inherent problems of nation-building there, had quite prepared him for the Byzantine complexities of Iraq post-Saddam.

Etherington describes in a concise yet lively style the many problems he and his American Deputy faced. Deposited in the city of Kut, a place with far from happy memories for the British military, the small team faced a daily struggle not only to engage with the locals but also to deal effectively with the many problems inflicted on them by their own higher authorities far removed from the realities on the ground. These included the lack of appropriate equipment and communications for his own small team, the often unhelpful or unrealistic rules imposed by Baghdad, or worse London, and the problems of dealing with a number of different sub-contractors charged with providing many of the services to the team but over whom he had little effective control or influence. Etherington recognises that in the prevailing

circumstances some use of contractors was inevitable, but he has some penetrating criticisms of many, though not all, of the companies involved and of the unrealistic expectations placed upon them. There are valuable lessons here regarding the controls that need to be in place if contractors are to be held to account to deliver the service required in an uncertain security situation.

Security was inevitably one of the CPA's major concerns. Without it the Governance Teams were incapable of providing the reassurance so necessary to allow the development of any form of democratic political process. The lack of access to a reliable intelligence system posed particular problems when trying to assess which of the local factions was to be trusted or at least engaged. The shadow of Saddam and fear of his return hung over the Iraqis until his capture in December of 2003. Even then, however, the lack of troops on the ground, and the inadequate COIN training of the Ukrainian Brigade in Kut and political constraints imposed by their Government meant that militias could and did attempt to intimidate opponents. In addition Etherington's team had to struggle with the entrenched tendency to centralisation of power under Saddam which still held sway, a pervasive but intensely competitive and highly localised tribal influence, and the power struggles within the religious groupings (notably within the Shia between followers of Moktada Al-Sadr and Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani). Eventually this erupted into open revolt on the part of the Sadrist militia, a revolt which led to Etherington's team being besieged and eventually rescued and withdrawn when the Ukrainians decided that their brigade should itself withdraw. US forces eventually confronted the Sadrists and re-established the coalition presence and authority in Kut.

Etherington resists the temptation to engage in the popular habit of wholesale criticism of the Americans. Whilst believing that many more troops were needed for the pacification task, he is admiring of the professionalism and spirit of those Americans he dealt with. He has some criticisms, but these are thoughtful and balanced. Nor is he uncritical of what he sees as the many failings on the British side of the coalition. Whilst the cultural divide between Westerners and Iraqis made his job infinitely more difficult, and well-known problems such as endemic police corruption were already present in 2003-4, he also met and co-operated with a number of impressive Iraqis for whom he clearly retains great admiration. It is these latter who give some hope for the future of the country.

This thought-provoking book is highly recommended for all those seeking further insights into the post-war situation in Iraq.

The views expressed by the reviewers in this list are theirs and theirs alone. Inclusion of a particular book within the reading list should not be taken to mean that the Royal Air Force or the Ministry of Defence endorses the contents. Manuscripts with challenging and even contrarian views will be included in order to stimulate thinking, discussion and debate.



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